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PCSW

Permanent Commission on the Status of Women

The State's leading force for women's equality

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**Testimony of
Michelle Noehren
Events & Special Projects Manager
The Permanent Commission on the Status of Women
Before the
Select Committee on Children
March 1, 2012**

**Re: H.B. 5218, AAC Toxic Fire Retardants in Children's Products
S.B. 194, AAC the Postponement of Jury Duty for Breastfeeding Mothers**

Senators Gerratana and Suzio, Representatives Urban and Wood, and members of the committee, thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony in support of H.B. 5218, AAC Toxic Fire Retardants in Children's Products and S.B. 194, AAC the Postponement of Jury Duty for Breastfeeding Mothers.

PCSW does not come before this committee very frequently because our purview is women over the age of 18 but the two bills we are here in support of today have a great impact on mothers.

H.B 5218, AAC Toxic Fire Retardants in Children's Products would ban the use of toxic chemicals, particularly toxis tris, in products geared towards children under the age of three. According to a report entitled *Hidden Hazards in the Nursery*, many of the products mothers use with their babies contain this toxic tris. These products include breastfeeding support pillows, car seats and diaper changing pads. Toxic tris has been shown to be a carcinogen, a hormone disruptor, and to have an impact on the nervous system.

While there are clear reasons to ban this chemical for the health of our children, we are also here because mothers deserve the ability to purchase products for their children that are safe. Most mothers have no idea that toxic chemicals are being used in common baby products. For example, many mothers choose to breastfeed their children to enhance their baby's immune systems but at the same time they may also be unknowingly exposing their child to toxic chemicals by using breastfeeding support pillows.

We applaud the committee's attention to the use of toxic chemicals in children's products because parents should be able to be confident that the products they buy and give their children are safe.

PCSW also supports **S.B. 194, AAC the Postponement of Jury Duty for Breastfeeding Mothers**. Jury duty is an important civic responsibility that all citizens should be ready to participate in, however for mothers that are breastfeeding and/or expressing milk by pumping, jury duty can present a challenge.

For very new mothers, many lactation consultants suggest not switching back and forth between breast and bottle until a good rhythm of breastfeeding has been established in order to avoid confusion. This means that many mothers do not have the option of pumping and must be physically present to feed their baby, which is a challenge if serving on jury duty.

Additionally, for women that are used to breastfeeding and/or expressing milk in certain intervals throughout the day, sitting in a courtroom for hours can literally cause physical pain as breasts become engorged. New babies breastfeed 8-10 times a day while older babies breastfeed anywhere from 6-8 times per day. Breastfeeding requires a series commitment and interruptions in her schedule can have a big impact on the mother.

S.B. 194 would ease these challenges and concerns by allowing the jury administrator more flexibility in granting a postponement of jury duty to breastfeeding mothers (up to 12 months). According to the National Conference of State Legislatures twelve other states currently exempt breastfeeding mothers from jury duty including California, Idaho, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Mississippi, Montana, Nebraska, Oklahoma, Oregon and Virginia.¹

Thank you for your attention to these matters and for the opportunity to provide testimony on behalf of women in Connecticut.

¹ National Council of State Legislatures, *Breastfeeding Laws*, May 2011 <<http://www.ncsl.org/issues-research/health/breastfeeding-state-laws.aspx>>